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CITE EXTENSION



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Workshop—"Managing Up"

Donna Browne

This is the second workshop session report from the recent Washington, DC, regional ACE spring workshop. Workshop presenter, Dr. Lawrence Lerer, Professor of Education, Defense Systems, Management College, Fort Belvoir, VA.

What is the manager's role?

It is to create an environment in which things can happen.

What can we do to help things happen, not only well, but happily?

Managers need to eliminate confrontation and teach the people we manage to focus on solutions.

Finding Solutions

When a problem arises, a good manager should make him/herself available to employees. This turns the notion of **confrontation** to a situation of **information**. Information is

power, and when you possess the information, you become powerful.

Encourage people you supervise by offering options and rewards. Sometimes if you offer a new piece of information, you'll get information back. Work out problems like a good sales person. Ask questions...find out how employees feel...ask how the situation arose...show receptivity for suggestions as to how problems can be remedied. Often the only people with the knowledge of both the problem and its solutions are those who have hands-on knowledge of procedures and practices. When dealing with frustrations and unhappiness, there's no room for guesswork.

Where Are We Going?

One of the most important things employees

should know are the organization's goals and objectives. Where are we going? What are we trying to accomplish? Once your employees have a firm grip on these answers, it's a lot easier for the entire group to head in the same direction.

Many well-organized workers have "to do" lists. If you and your staff keep individual lists, it can be a helpful check to be sure you all have your sights set in the same direction. In fact, your own "to do" list can help your supervisor understand daily and weekly goals for yourself and your staff. If everyone works methodically, in the same careful steps, toward a common goal, the work will be accomplished smoothly...staff time will be used to function, instead of moving from crisis to crisis.

Recognize Differences

Managers need to admit we are not always right. If you learn to treasure and respond to the difference in personalities, opinions, and methods, your staff will feel respected and worthwhile. In most cases, there are no absolute rights or wrongs...only differences. Once you respect these differences, you can actually enjoy the variety and exhilaration the differences bring to the workplace. When you set an example of allowing for differences in your staff, they will begin to notice and respect the differences among themselves.

To help in the process of learning to make allowances, bear in mind that while most people can't make drastic changes, **relationships can change**. Remember that every complaint is actually a request for a solution.

M^{ee}t CIT

For this issue of *CITExtension*, we are doubling up on our introductions of CIT staff because our two subjects are a team. **Everett Dowd** and **Steven Conn** are contracted CITers who act as our "imported" computer gurus.

Everett Dowd has been with CIT a year this month, helping ES-USDA with its electronic technology. Everett is working in computer network development, and is one of the contacts in getting passwords assigned to new users on our interim system, CES-NET. He also works with us in ordering and installing computer equipment and software, in connecting users to the Local Area Network (LAN) system here in USDA, and is "kept hopping" troubleshooting with PC's all over ES.

Denver Denizen

Born and raised in Colorado, most of Everett's relatives are still in the Denver area. He holds an A.A.S. in computers and business management, and is working on a B.S. degree in computer science at George Mason University, in suburban Virginia.

His interest in computers came with a job in the printing and publishing industry, at the time when computers were beginning to merge with printing. The more the two methods merged, the more Everett's interest leaned toward the computer side. It wasn't long before he was setting up

software and providing guidance on types of computer equipment and programs needed for printing operations. From there, he moved to designing networks and user training. His combined knowledge of computers and printing landed him in the Washington, DC, area and, ultimately, contracted to our staff.

Skilling Single

Everett is a bachelor who loves outdoor activities, including snow skiing and bicycling. He also enjoys music, reading (science fiction and classics), things with wheels, and cooking.



Everett Dowd



Steven Conn

Steven Conn joined CIT in December 1989. A graduate of the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, his undergraduate studies were in philosophy, mathematics, and computer science.

Computer Happy

Steven's love of computers began in high school. "In those days, 'user friendly' referred to punched cards that didn't jam the keypunch," says Steven. However, this introduction to early computers was enough to keep Steve's interest level high.

Steve's vocational association with computers started shortly after he finished his undergraduate work, when he realized that his intimate

knowledge of mainframe and microcomputer word processing and text formatting was pointing in a clear career path.

He spent 4-1/2 years as a microcomputer specialist at Catherine McAuley Health Center in Ann Arbor, and with other computer jobs. Steve came to Washington, DC, after his wife, Shareen Ober, landed a job here as a television production technician at U.S. Senate TV.

Provides PC Comfort

Steven's most important responsibility with ES is to ensure that staff and their computers share a comfortable and productive relationship. In addition, he writes software, acts as a technical consultant for CES information technol-

ogy projects, digests a nearly endless stream of technical information, and helps ES-CIT's **Bob Routson** administer the agency LAN system.

Good Listener

The first thing ES-USDA staff learned about Steven is that he is a good listener and patient teacher. His quick response to panic-stricken PC users who have just lost a 23-page document, and his gentle computer-side manner, have won him many admirers both in CIT and ES. Perhaps his love of listening and relaxing to classical music (particularly Beethoven, Brahms, and Mahler) has heightened his ability to be a good listener.

Action Plan Begins With Communications

Jodi Horigan

One of the first steps of a new ES-USDA action plan, formulated as the result of a random survey of ES and state staff and introduced at the recent annual ES staff conference, is to improve communications at all levels. **Mitch Geasler**, associate administrator, and head of the action plan effort, told staff that communications

should begin with efforts to talk to one another more...to convey hopes, fears, frustrations, and enthusiasm verbally. Speaking of the staff conference, Geasler remarked in a recent followup memo to all staff, "To see all of the staff together, interacting and smiling, was very rewarding." To help our staff communicate feelings, suggestions, and important

occurrences, a communications panel was appointed to be "listeners," as staff express themselves about challenges and feelings.

"Listeners" May Use Different Methods

Communications panel members are to devise their own methods of communicating with individual unit staff members. Some

members are using a "suggestion box" method to drop off messages and ideas. Others may act as a verbal sounding board and build colleagues' confidence on a personal basis. The end result—to ensure a good communications flow among staff and build on the momentum of a successful staff conference.

Another Fighter For Clear Writing

The *Washington Post* reports that **Veterans Affairs Secretary Edward J. Derwinski** is taking up arms against "gobbledygook" at that agency (formerly known as Veterans Administration). His first encounter with his new agency's propensity for complicated wording was a six-page letter responding to the widow of

a veteran requesting that her late husband's fight against alcoholism not be made public. It was full of legal language and citations on the applicable laws on privacy and recordkeeping.

Three Paragraphs Suffice

Derwinski drafted a replacement letter, himself,

only three paragraphs long. The first paragraph expressed regret over her husband's death, the second assured her "no one will know" of her husband's medical condition, and the third urged her to write him if she had any further questions. After that first experience with government gobbledygook, Derwinski arranged for an Air Force

language specialist to critique VA government writing and drum in the message that brief is better. He wants writers to use "plain, old-fashioned" English. "Letters should be simple, direct, and, whenever possible, should show some feeling," directs Derwinski.

"IN BASKET"

Paul H. Gwin, professor emeritus, Extension Education, University of Missouri, writes that the supply of the book he wrote with **Herbert F.**

Lionberger, *Communication Strategies: A Guide for Agricultural Change Agents*, is no more. The authors are working on an extensive revision, and,

until the revised edition is available, they are granting permission for users to copy any parts needed for teaching classes and workshops.

"We think you will find the revision to your liking," writes Paul, "as we have included suggestions some of you made after trying the first edition."

W

rite to Read

OPEDA News (April 1990) reprinted a panel presentation by **Thomas S. McFee**, assistant secretary for personnel administration, Department of Health and Human Services, which was held in January of this year.

The two-plus page presentation, "Strategies and Partnerships to Meet the Public Service Challenges of

the 21st Century (Management Climate)," highlights the differences and challenges those who work in public service must recognize and deal with.

Contact **Jodi Horigan**, at 202-447-6145, to request a FAX copy.

Sources

The Washington Post, Thursday, June 21 issue.
OPEDA News, April 1990 issue. Organization of Professional Employees of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, DC.

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